COMIX WAVE 88. June, 1990.
© Clay Geerdes, Box 7081, Berkeley, Ca 94707. Logo by Jim Siergey. All Rights Reserved. Artwork herein © the artists concerned. Used for promotional purposes only.

COMIX PLUGOLA

The twelfth issue of Robert Pasternak's ACID MAN SOCIETY is available from CW for 50¢/stamp.

JAKA'S STORY continues in Dave Sim's CEREBUS 16 at your local comic book store.

Scott Shaw is doing his Oddball Comic slide show at the Aztec Center of San Diego State U on March 31 at 7:30. Call 544-9555 for info. Scott's collection contains a lot of overground stuff that was much weirder than anything that appeared in the underground comix.

If you haven't gotten a copy of Robert Williams' VISUAL ADDICTION, you've missed seeing some of the most bizarre fantasy paintings since the golden age of Dali. $22.50 pp from Last Gasp, 2180 Bryant Street. San Francisco, CA 94110. For $2, you can get Last Gasp's latest catalog. The infamous Cherry Poptart is on the cover to promote the collection of Cherry's adventures due out later this year.

Don't miss REAL LIFE, a collection of graphic stores by Mark Zingarelli. Tightly written realistic stories.

MADNESS BY MAIL 3 is $1.75 pp from Acid Pit Press, 26 Pleasant Ave., Barre, MA 01005. DZ. Trades ads for submissions.

Michael Stengl has MUNDANE STORIES, a new mini, and ANIMALS OF TRINIDAD [with John Dooley], a DZ. Both for $4 pp. P. O. Box 568, Trinidad, CA 95570. * MONKS ON THE ROAD is 50¢/stamp from Mick Cusimano, POB 2565, Harvard Square Station, Cambridge, MA 02238.*

SPICY RETURNS

In November of 1934, readers of SPICY DETECTIVE got a little surprise bonus with the first appearance of Adolphe Barreaux' SALLY THE SLEUTH. Sally would appear in four page cartoon adventures for nearly a decade before giving in to censorship pressures and putting on the towel. The formula in the Sally stories was a simple one. Sally, like Nancy Drew, would stumble upon a crime in progress, get involved, lose her clothes somewhere along the way, and finish up routing the villains, sometimes with official detective help, but more often on her lonesome. Sally was delicately drawn in this pre-pubic decade when the physical contact in the script was limited to out of bed rough and tumble. Though not primarily a bondage strip, Sally was often captured or kidnapped and tied up until rescued. In some cases, she was whipped and more than once she got into hair-pulling and scratching matches with female villains. This was called cat fighting at the time. Sally reappeared in PRIVATE DETECTIVE in 1950 and interest in her revived off and on during the underground comix period in the seventies. The Sally formula was used by Harvey Kurtzman in LITTLE ANNIE FANNY. A selection of her adventures appears in the new SPICY TALES COLLECTION edited by Tom Mason and available from Malibu Graphics [1355 Lawrence Drive #212, Newbury Park, CA 91320, $9.95 plus $2 postage and handling]. 136 pp, perfect bound.

JIM RYAN ON COMIX CULTURE

You [referring to Clay Geerdes to whom this letter was addressed] point out that the media register the impact of a genre by elevating some of its practitioners to star status, and you are [rightly] disappointed that only Crumb and Shelton became famous, with dozens of other fine artists being overlooked. But if you avoid the media-fostered assumption that stars must be produced for a genre to have had success or impact, the comix phen-omenon makes more sense.

And we have to forget distinctions of high culture and low culture--a distinction created and maintained by those who make money peddling high culture to insecure snobs. Comix are a nonelectronic, black and white medium, so we cannot expect them to have more than a subtle impact. We have to think of their importance qualitatively, not quantitatively. They may not have influenced a large proportion of the population, but they influenced some people profoundly.

It is easy to overlook that if you regard comix primarily as a phenomenon inextricably associated with the Bay Area scene of 20 years ago. Believe me, that scene meant very little to thousands of readers across the country, and I suspect that those are the people who bought most of the comix, by mail or in local shops. To lots of individuals around the country, comix were a taste of freedom, a shot of creativity, a lot of laughs and a minor rebellion. What was going on in California was only of ancillary interst to these folks. They were interested in the comix themselves, and the comix provided a little bit of alternative cultural input that helped such people to survive and form destandardized outlooks.

UNDERGROUND COMIX AGAIN

As I have written elsewhere, there were several major focal points for the underground comix of the early seventies, the Bay Area, New York, and Wisconsin, but the comix that got into print in those areas were drawn by people from different places. After all, the five men who formed Rip Off Press back in 1969 were all Texans, not Californians, and what is reflected in the stories about the Freak Brothers has more to do with Texas mores and folklore than with anything peculiar to the Bay Area. Had it not been for a few men who were willing to take on the *business* of comix, the whole scene would be long forgotten and most of the art still in sketchbooks or on the walls of private rooms never to be seen by the public. Those who were critical in getting the books out, advertising and distributing them, were men like Don Schenkor and Bob Rita of The Print Mint, Ron Turner of Last Gasp, Gary Arlington who founded the San Francisco Comic Book Company out of his store in the Mission district, and Denis Kitchen who held Krupp Comic Works together. While Ron Turner published IT AIN'T ME BABE COMIX and the early issues of WIMMEN'S COMIX, one exclusively feminist company run by women was Nannygoat Productions, started by Joyce Farmer and Lyn Chevli back in 1973.

It's always easier to focus on a single star, particularly if you are a writer, but in truth there is no such animal. No one does it all alone. A few people are more important than others, because it is hard to think about who might replace them. No art, no comic book, but no publisher, no comic book either. True, the artist could publish his own book, but in most cases this has not worked out.

If you are standing in a store reading a comic book, that book passed through a lot of hands before it got to yours. Someone had to shoot that art, clean up the negatives and paste them up, run the guts on a Webb press, do the color separations on the cover, run those to a printer, get the covers printed, get guts and covers back together, get all of that to a bindery where it could be collated and stapled, pick up the finished books, load and unload them, organize and ship them out to retailers and mail order customers--there were hundreds of people involved in getting that comic book into your hands. We're talking about a team effort, not something one person can do alone, yet only one person is going to get the credit for that book in the minds of most of you and that's the artist. You take the rest of the work for granted.

For most people there is a marriage between form and content. Usually, when something is really satisfying, the form doesn't show. You are only aware of the content; indeed, when you do become aware of the form, this is often upsetting. We don't expect to see a light technician on the set of DALLAS or the shadow of a boom in a period Western. Underground artists often played with the form, deliberately calling the reader's attention to the fact that he was reading a comic book. With comix, we have a strange problem. We are in a form that is rejected as trivial by the mass readership, hence any content within that form is negated, be it a discussion of atomic energy and its effects on the environment or the influence of governmental agencies on the economic behavior of the population. Even within the comics community, there is a hierarchy of form and content. If something appears in a minicomic or digestzine or simply a little pamphlet of some kind, it lacks the status it would have if it appeared in a 32 page B/w book with a glossy cover. That comic lacks the status it would have if it were printed entirely in color and the color comics lack the status they would have if they had DC or some other mainstream logo stamped on the cover. We're talking strictly about form here, because a Batman story could appear in a digestzine as well as in the various color comics and graphic albums currently on sale; indeed, one of the ways to commercial success is for the content to appear in as many forms as possible. Last year saw Batman and his paraphenalia on everything from towels to toilet tissue and this year the same is due to happen with Eastman and Laird's TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES.

That's enough for now. COMIX WAVE is interested in hearing your opinion about comix and popular culture. If you have a Mac, set your letter in this size column and keep it short enough to print. I use New Century Schoolbook font 12. I'm just not going to typeset any long letters, guys, sorry.

People who send me two copies of their zines in payment for a plug, I will run your cover on a space available basis if you send me a small two or three inch stat. I don't run hardcore sex stuff in the newsletter, so if that's your trip, sorry. C. G.

COMIX PLUGOLA

WHAT PRICE FEMINISM?

Ms. MAGAZINE bellied up last November, but Gloria Steinem's latest plan is to revive the magazine sans ads. Six 100 page issues a year for $40. Good luck, Gloria.

Now available from Not Available [doncha love it?] Comics--THE DEATH OF ANTISOCIALMAN, Chapter One. 50¢/stamp. 3867 Bristow, Detroit, MI 48212. Story by Walt Lockley and art by Matt Feazell.

LOT LIZARD

A lot lizard is a prostitute who lures a truck driver into a truck stop and sells him sex. The lot lizzies advertise on their CB radios. I learn things like this from reading Ann Landers.

HAMBURGEROLOGY?

Harper's Index noted that the 4 managers of the Moscow McDonald's attended the Canadian Institute of Hamburgerology for 9 months.

RAGTIME

So what would happen if suddenly, magically, men could menstruate and women could not? Men would brag about how long and how much. Street guys would invent slang ("He's a three pad man") and give each other high fives on the corner with some exchange like, 'Man, you lookin' good!' 'Yeah, man, I'm on the rag!"

Gloria Steinem

Quoted in the ANDERSON VALLEY ADVERTISER, America's only truly underground newspaper. 3/14/90